



# Brett Johnson

*Journalism Studies*

**University of Missouri-Columbia**

Dr. Brett Johnson is an associate professor of journalism studies at the Missouri School of Journalism. He received his MA in Journalism from the University of Iowa (2011) and his PhD in Mass Communication from the University of Minnesota (2015). He is currently working on his law degree part-time at the MU School of Law.



The thing that drives Johnson's research is "extreme speech"—hate speech, defamation, threats, incitement, or any other speech that is supposed to exist at the fringe of public discourse, yet somehow still makes disturbing inroads into the mainstream. The same question that has vexed major First Amendment scholars is the foundation for his work: Why does the United States, under the First Amendment, give more legal protection for extreme speech than anywhere else in the world?

Johnson studies fascinating issues about the role of extreme speech in American democracy. For example, he looks at the theories and legal doctrines that define when extreme speech crosses the line in America. He also studies how social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have disrupted the definitions of extreme speech. Lastly, he has talked with journalists about how they report on extreme speech.

Johnson takes great pride in bringing his scholarship to audiences outside the academy. He has spoken numerous times at public high schools about First Amendment issues, as well as at public libraries and to students at the Journalism Educators Association (JEA) national convention.

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